**Illegal Immigrants: Drugs, Gangs and Crime**

Paramilitary groups trading fire with U.S. agents. Kidnappings and murders of U.S. citizens. Members of al-Qaida, Hezbollah and other terrorist organizations infiltrating the border on a routine basis. We are not talking about Iraq – but Texas. One of the clearest indicators the United States has lost control of its southwest border is the ease with which thousands of tons of drugs and millions of illegal aliens are crossing the U.S. border on an annual basis. This open borders policy has opened the door to more than just cheap labor. The presence of millions of undocumented persons in our country has provided a perfect cover for various forms of criminal activity, ranging from drug trafficking to prostitution to identity theft.

**Drugs**

Federal investigators believe that as much as 2.2 million kilograms of cocaine and 11.6 kilograms of marijuana were smuggled into the United States via the Mexican border in 2005.1 With the decline of the Medellin and Cali cartels of Columbia, two Mexican drug cartels – the Sinaloa cartel and the Gulf cartel – are battling over the billion-dollar drug trade between Mexico and the United States. These cartels also have ties to U.S. gangs that serve as distribution networks in the interior United States. A 2006 study by the House Committee on Homeland Security warns that the Mexican cartels have essentially wrested control of the border from both the U.S. and Mexican governments:

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration reports that the Mexican drug syndicates operating today along our Nation’s Southwest border are far more sophisticated and dangerous than any of the other organized criminal groups in America’s law enforcement history. Indeed, these powerful drug cartels, and the human smuggling networks and gangs they leverage, have immense control over the routes into the United States and continue to pose formidable challenges to our efforts to secure the Southwest border. … The cartels operate along the border with military grade weapons, technology and intelligence and their own respective paramilitary enforcers. ... This new breed of cartel is not only more violent, powerful and well financed, it is also deeply engaged in intelligence collection on both sides of the border.2

Here in North Carolina, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) reports “a significant increase in drug-trafficking activity.” Explains the DEA: “The majority of the increased drug-trafficking activity is due to an unprecedented influx of foreign nationals into the state” – in particular “Spanish-speaking, specifically Mexican, nationals.” A 2003 report by the National Drug Intelligence Center corroborates the DEA’s findings:

Mexican criminal groups in southwestern states and Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) in Mexico routinely use Mexican illegal immigrants in North Carolina as couriers to transport cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamine and, to a lesser extent, heroin into and through the state. These criminal groups exploit a growing Mexican population in North Carolina to facilitate their illicit activities. Law enforcement authorities in North Carolina, principally in the western and southern areas of the state, indicate that Mexican criminal groups are also increasing their involvement in retail drug distribution.3

 Needless to say, the majority of illegal immigrants are not directly involved in the drug trade. Nevertheless, the DEA has determined that “their presence allows Mexican traffickers to effectively conceal their activities within immigrant communities.”4 Johnston County Sheriff Steve Bizzell (R) estimates that 80 percent to 85 percent of the drug trade in his county is conducted by Hispanics.5 In 2002, the Wake County Sheriff’s Office similarly reported that although Hispanics comprised only 5.4 percent of the population, they accounted for 46 percent of drug-trafficking arrests.6